



DARK NIGHTS

1

BATMAN

THE MERCILESS

**DARK NIGHTS
METAL
TIE-IN**



FABOK
2017

**Tomasi
Manapul**

RATED **T+** TEEN PLUS DCCOMICS.COM DEC 2017

**EARTH 12.
THEN.**

IT WAS SUPPOSED TO
BE THE FINAL WAR. THE
LAST BATTLE BETWEEN
GOOD AND EVIL.

WE FOUGHT IT TOGETHER,
DIANA. WE THOUGHT
IT WOULD BE THE END.

IF ONLY WE
KNEW...THE REAL WAR
HAD JUST BEGUN.

These are the stories from
the DARK MULTIVERSE that
should NEVER be...

Witness the rise of
the Dark Knights...

BATMAN THE MERCILESS IN WRATH CHILD

PETER J. TOMASI STORY AND WORDS
FRANCIS MANAPUL ARTIST TOM NAPOLITANO LETTERER
JAY FABOK AND BRAD ANDERSON COVER
ANDREW MARINO ASSISTANT EDITOR EDDIE BERGANZA EDITOR
SPECIAL THANKS TO SCOTT SNYDER, GREG CAPULLO AND JAMES TYNION IV
BATMAN CREATED BY BOB KANE WITH BILL FINGER
SUPERMAN CREATED BY JERRY SIEGEL AND JOE SHUSTER.
BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH THE JERRY SIEGEL FAMILY.

NOW.
EARTH-O, OUR WORLD.
Langley, Virginia. HQ of A.R.G.U.S.
The WAR ROOM.

OKAY, PEOPLE, THE FACT THAT BY EXECUTIVE ORDER, A.R.G.U.S. HAS BEEN CHARGED WITH GATHERING THE HEADS OF S.H.A.D.E., THE D.E.O., TASK FORCE X AND OUR OWN MILITARY, LETS YOU KNOW WE'VE NOT ONLY FORMED THE MOST UN-EASIEST OF ALLIANCES...

...BUT ARE ALSO OPERATING UNDER **CRISIS PROTOCOLS**.

WITH ALL KEY MEMBERS OF THE JUSTICE LEAGUE M.I.A. OUR GOAL'S TO LAY OUT OPTIONS FOR COUNTER-MEASURES.

LET'S START WITH THE MILITARY. GENERAL LANE?

WE'RE ALL ADULTS HERE-- NO OFFENSE MEANT, **FATHER TIME**--SO NO NEED TO SUGAR-COAT THIS MESS.

PURE AND SIMPLE, WE'RE ROYALLY SCREWED.

WE'VE GOT US A FULL-SCALE INVASION AS WE SIT HERE.

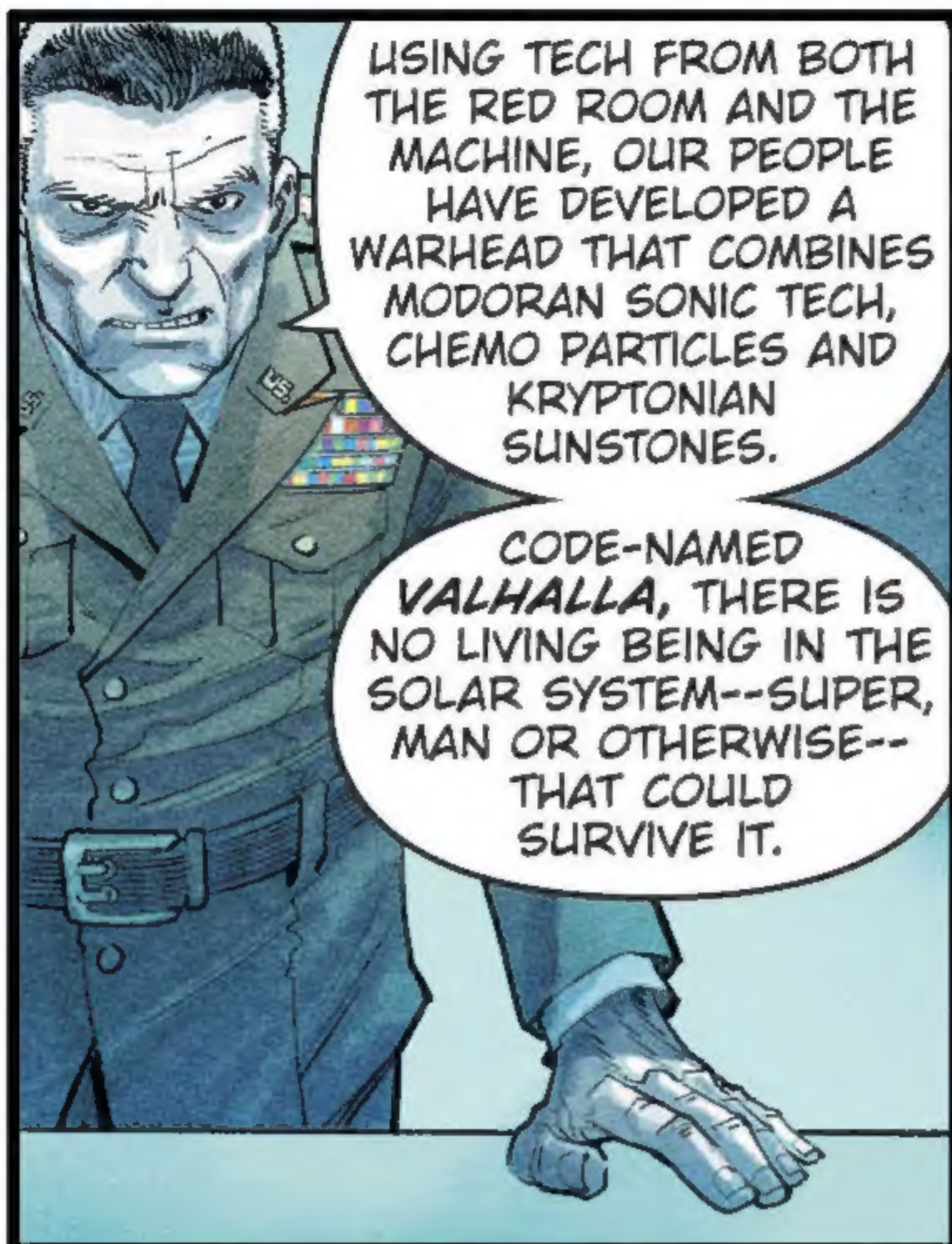
IN THE FIVE DAYS SINCE THAT MOUNTAIN POKED UP IN THE MIDDLE OF GOTHAM CITY WE'VE SEEN METROPOLIS, CENTRAL CITY, DETROIT, COAST CITY, AMNESTY BAY AND EVEN THE LEAGUE WATCHTOWER BE SYSTEMATICALLY TAKEN OUT BY THESE UNKNOWN FORCES.

EARLY BATTLEFIELD REPORTS DESCRIBED THE INVADERS AS "NIGHTMARE BATMEN."

WE SENT WALLER'S "SUICIDE SQUAD" INTO GOTHAM TO CONFIRM AND TERMINATE, BUT ALL CONTACT'S BEEN LOST.

THE SPECIAL GPS UNITS WE IMPLANTED IN THEM ALL WENT OFFLINE, SO WE ONLY CAN PRESUME THEY'VE BEEN COMPROMISED OR KILLED.

RIGHT, SO WITH ALL THE COLORFUL SUPER-FOLKS SCRATCHED FROM THE LINEUP, AND POTUS MOVED TO AN ORBITAL SECURE ZONE ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE, IT'S TIME FOR US TO DO WHAT WE ALWAYS DO, WHICH IS TAKE OVER AND CLEAN UP THIS MESS.



USING TECH FROM BOTH THE RED ROOM AND THE MACHINE, OUR PEOPLE HAVE DEVELOPED A WARHEAD THAT COMBINES MODORAN SONIC TECH, CHEROKEE PARTICLES AND KRYPTONIAN SUNSTONES.

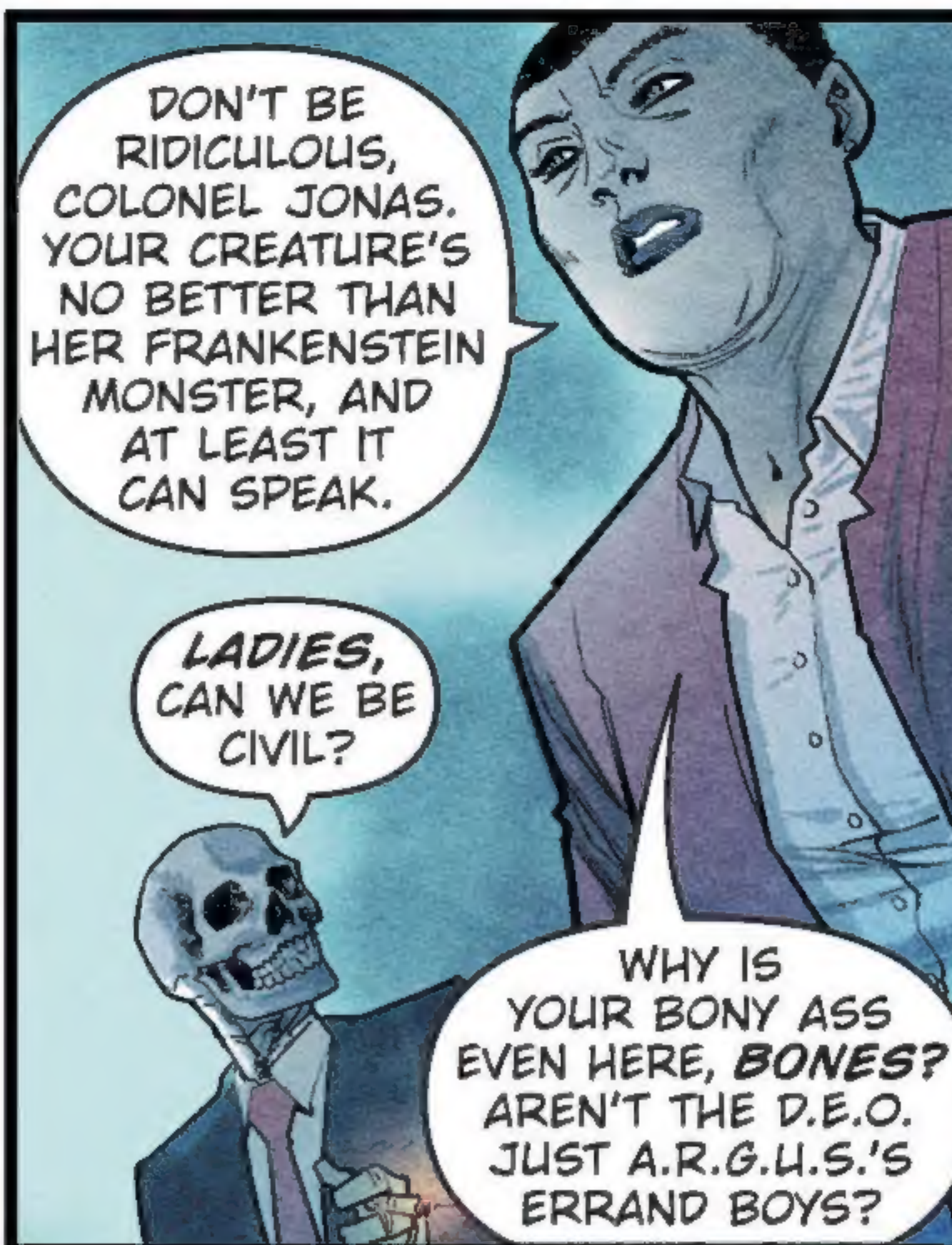
CODE-NAMED VALHALLA, THERE IS NO LIVING BEING IN THE SOLAR SYSTEM--SUPER, MAN OR OTHERWISE-- THAT COULD SURVIVE IT.



OH, SAMMY, YOU THINK ALL YOUR PROBLEMS CAN JUST BE BLOWN AWAY. YOU SHOULD BE SO LUCKY.

NONE OF YOUR CLAIRVOYANTS OR OTHER MONSTERS FROM S.H.A.D.E. GAVE US ANY WARNING THIS WAS COMING, FATHER TIME. WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?

LET ME DROP *ELVIS* ON THEM.



DON'T BE RIDICULOUS, COLONEL JONAS. YOUR CREATURE'S NO BETTER THAN HER FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER, AND AT LEAST IT CAN SPEAK.

LADIES, CAN WE BE CIVIL?

WHY IS YOUR BONY ASS EVEN HERE, *BONES*? AREN'T THE D.E.O. JUST A.R.G.U.S.'S ERRAND BOYS?



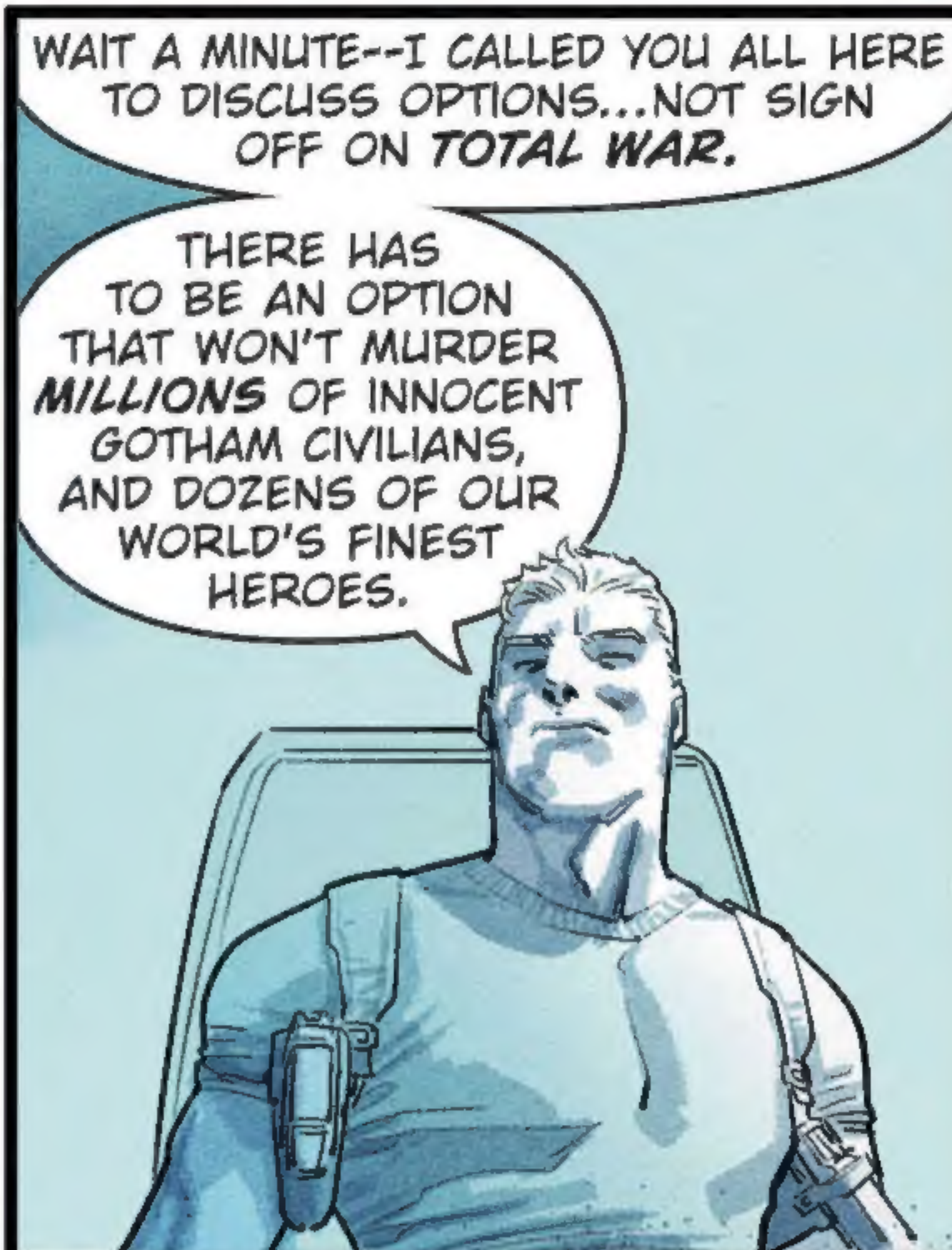
I'M SURE WONDER WOMAN AND THE REST OF THE JUSTICE LEAGUE ARE PLANNING HOW TO HANDLE THIS. THEY ALWAYS--



--FAIL.

THE MASKS AND CAPES ARE NOT COMING TO SAVE THE DAY! IT'S ON US TO ACT, AND DO IT *NOW*!

BIRD'S ALREADY IN THE AIR. WE JUST HAVE TO ZERO IT WHERE IT'LL DO THE MOST GOOD.



WAIT A MINUTE--I CALLED YOU ALL HERE TO DISCUSS OPTIONS...NOT SIGN OFF ON *TOTAL WAR*.


THERE HAS TO BE AN OPTION THAT WON'T MURDER *MILLIONS* OF INNOCENT GOTHAM CIVILIANS, AND DOZENS OF OUR WORLD'S FINEST HEROES.



FIGURES A POWER-POINT RANGER LIKE YOU, TREVOR, WOULDN'T HAVE THE STEEL B--

SECURITY BREACH ON UPPER LEVEL!

BOOM



LOOK AT
THEM PLAYING
AT WAR.

ME, I'VE LIVED
IT PRACTICALLY
MY WHOLE LIFE.

I WAS ONLY EIGHT YEARS
OLD WHEN MY WAR BEGAN,
WITH A SHOT FIRED IN A
GOTHAM CITY ALLEY...

...BEGAN WITH AN OATH
TO MYSELF THAT WHAT
HAPPENED TO ME COULD
NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN.

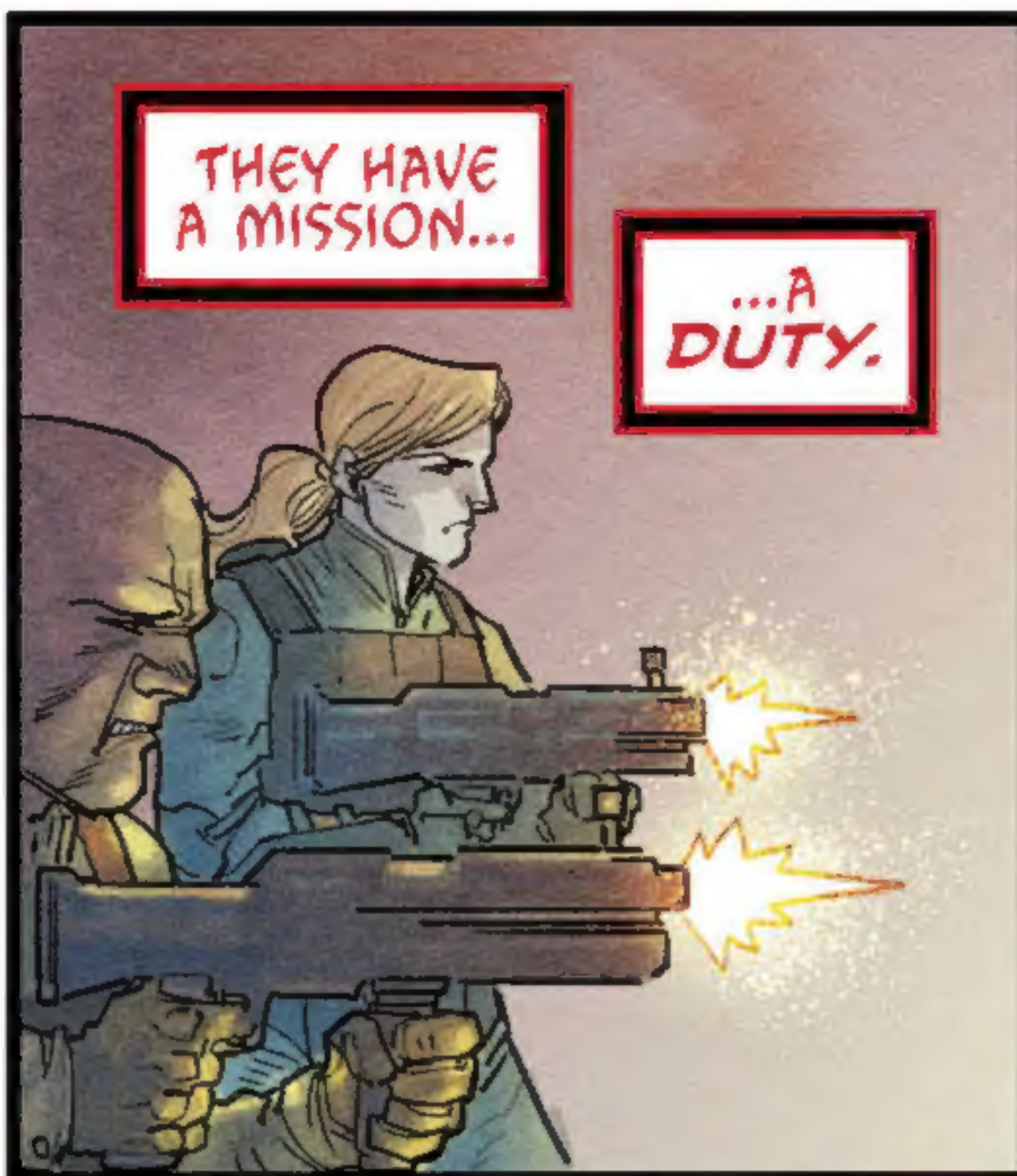
AN OATH THAT
I WOULD WAGE MY
BATTLE JUSTLY, WITH
RULES, WITH MERCY,
UNLIKE MY ENEMY.

WHAT A
FOOL I WAS,
BACK THEN.

OH
GOD...



THEIR EYES SHINE WITH FERVOR AND FEAR.

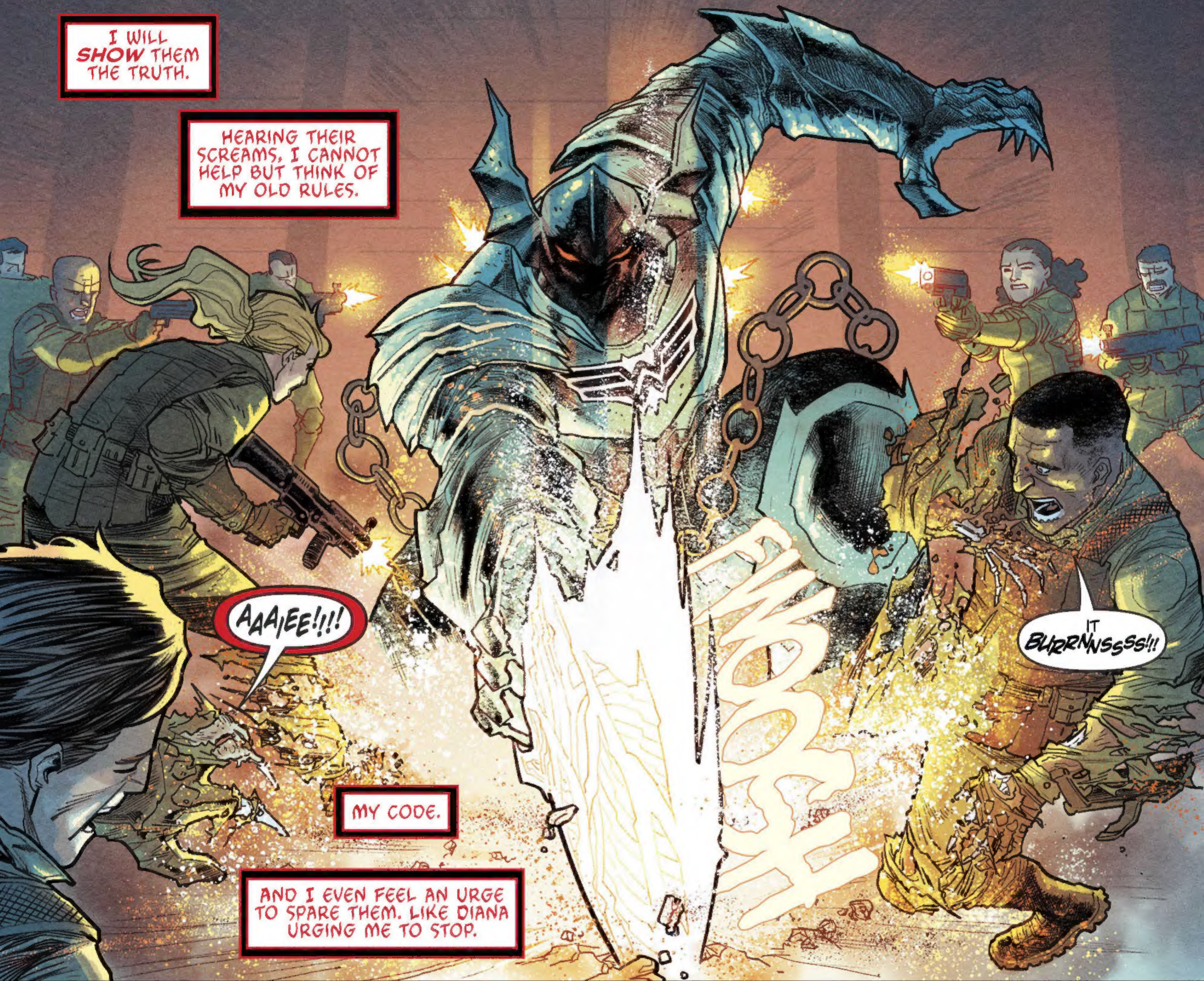


THEY HAVE A MISSION...

...A DUTY.



JUST AS I DID, YEARS AGO.



I WILL **SHOW** THEM THE TRUTH.

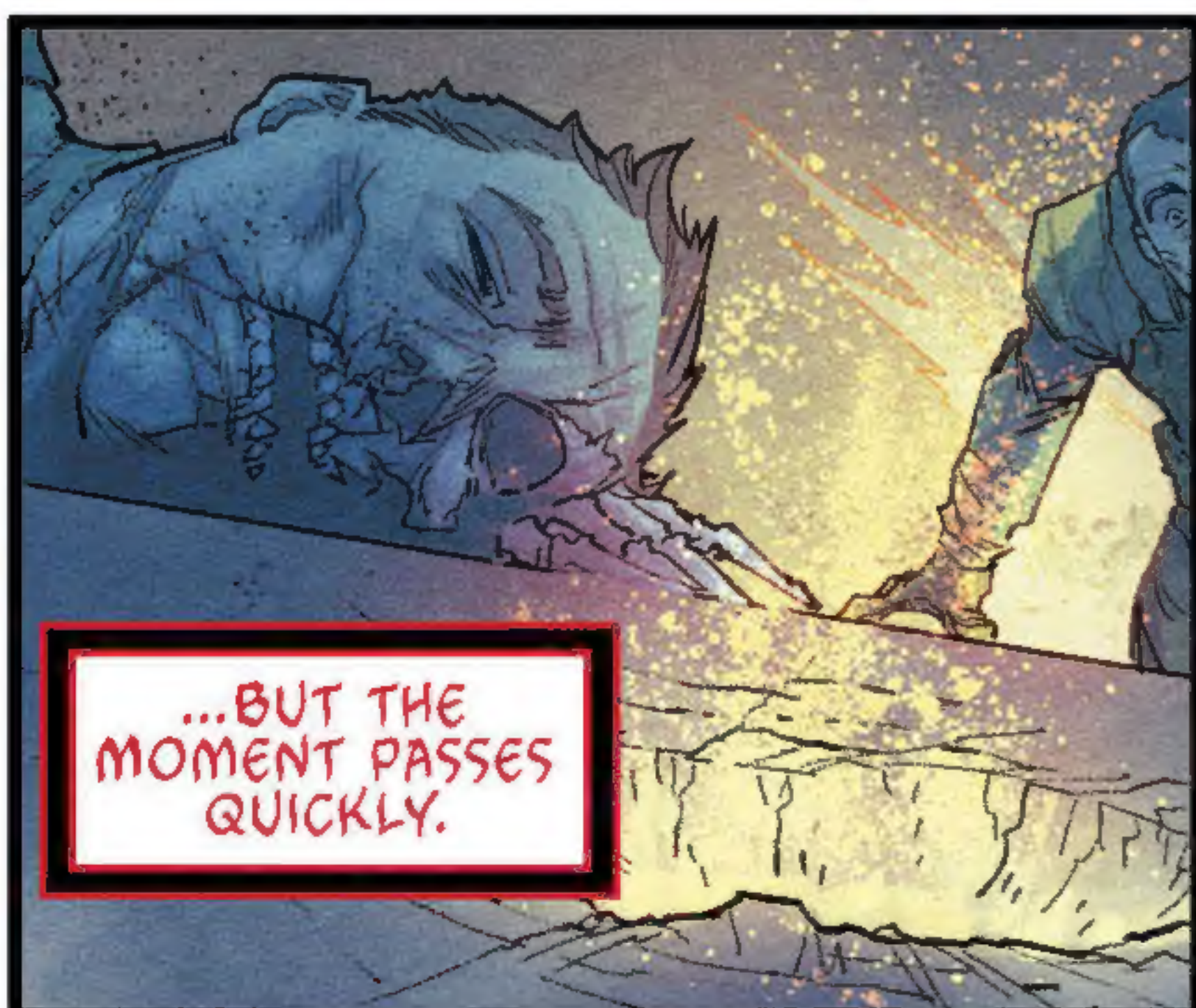
HEARING THEIR SCREAMS, I CANNOT HELP BUT THINK OF MY OLD RULES.

AAAIEEE!!!

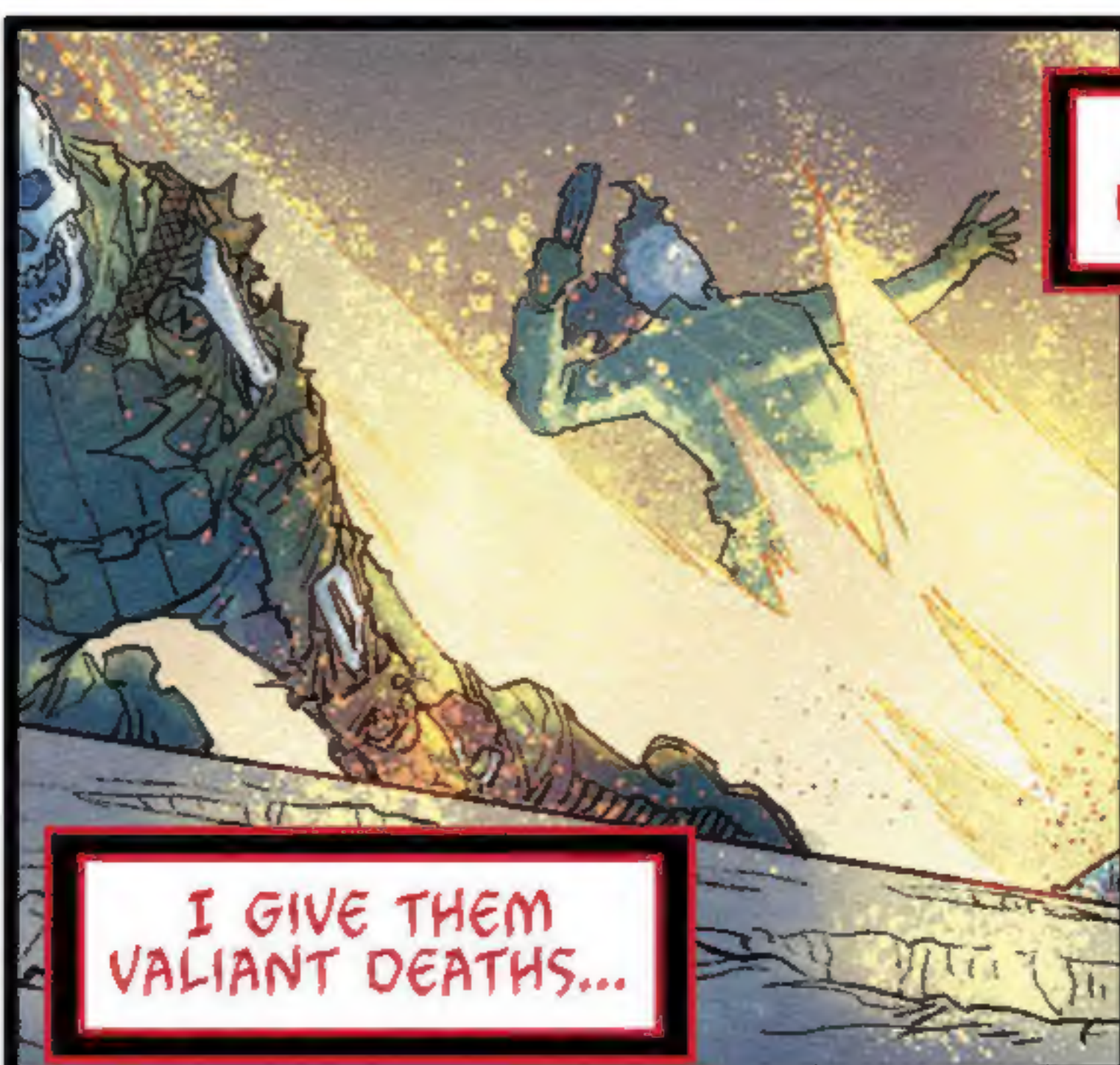
IT **BURNNSSSS!!!**

MY CODE.

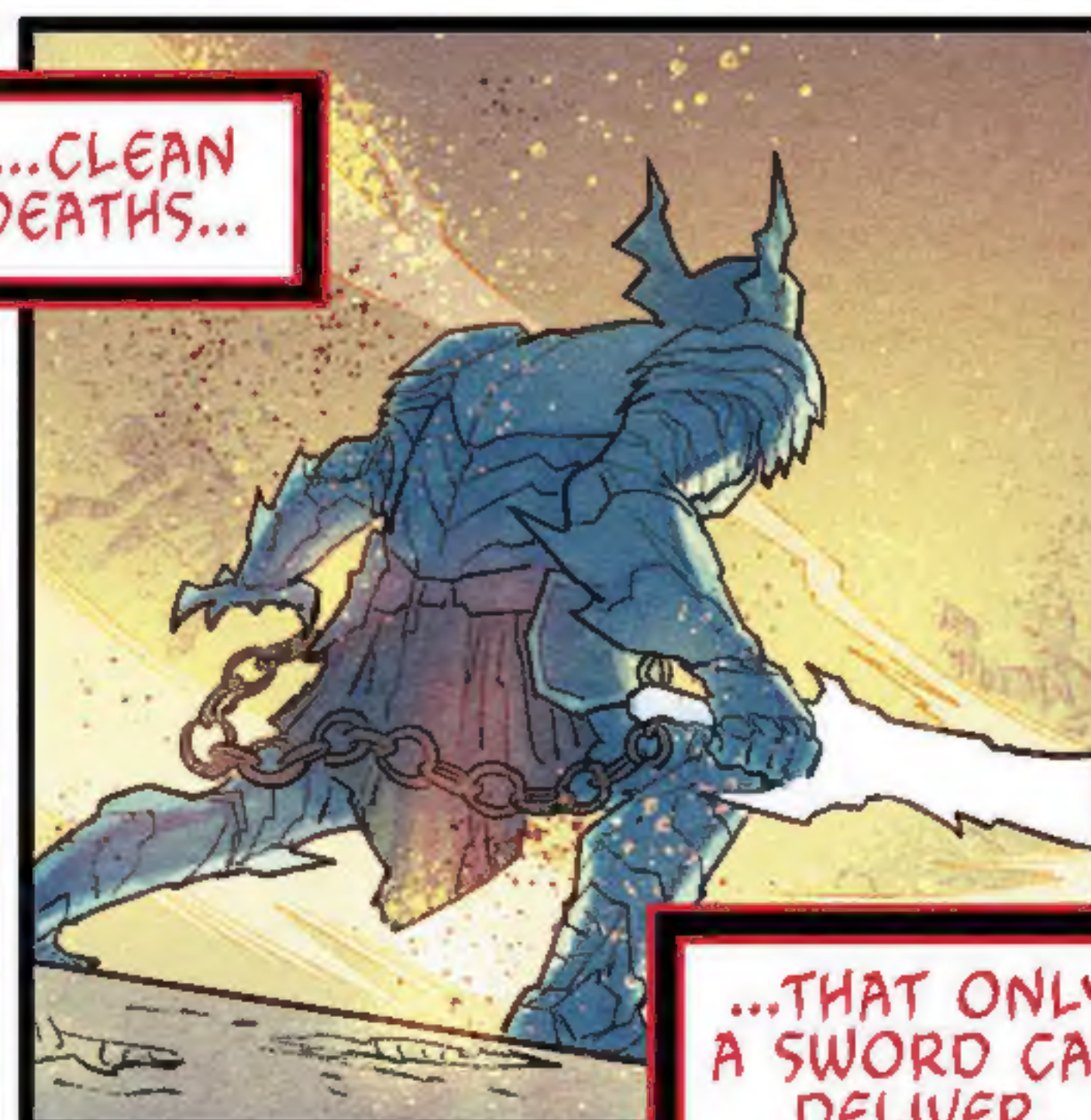
AND I EVEN FEEL AN URGE TO SPARE THEM. LIKE DIANA URGING ME TO STOP.



...BUT THE MOMENT PASSES QUICKLY.



I GIVE THEM VALIANT DEATHS...



...CLEAN DEATHS...

...THAT ONLY A SWORD CAN DELIVER.



"LANE! WHAT ARE YOU DOING! THOSE COORDINATES... YOU'RE SENDING THE BOMBERS *HERE*?!"



HE'S MAKING HIS WAY TO US, FLOOR BY FLOOR. HE'S AFTER VALHALLA.



SO I SAY WE BRING IT DOWN ON HIS HEAD.

KLKK



LIGNN

KRAK

YOU'RE CRAZY--DO YOU REALIZE WHAT YOU'RE COMMITTING US TO?!

YOU JUST SIGNED THE DEATH SENTENCE FOR THIS WHOLE DAMN CITY!



STEP AWAY, TREVOR. THE GENERAL IS RIGHT. THIS IS THE BEST OPTION. MILLIONS DEAD TO SAVE BILLIONS.

IT'S JUST MATH.

AND THE JOB.

SHE LOVED A MAN BEFORE ME. TREVOR, AN HONORABLE SOLDIER. HE DIED IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE WAR.

IT HAD HAPPENED OVERNIGHT. ARES HAD FORGED A NEW HELMET THAT MAGNIFIED HIS POWERS A HUNDREDFOLD.

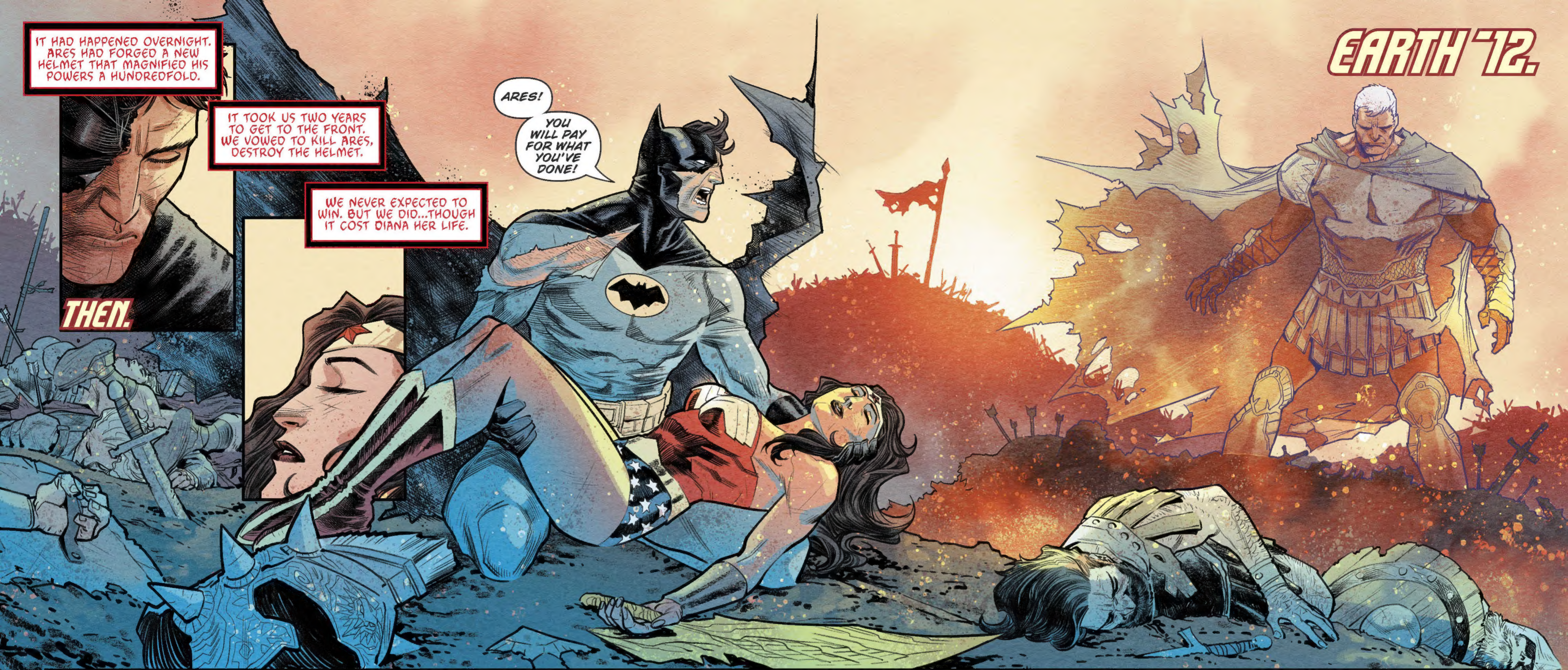
IT TOOK US TWO YEARS TO GET TO THE FRONT. WE VOWED TO KILL ARES, DESTROY THE HELMET.

WE NEVER EXPECTED TO WIN. BUT WE DID...THOUGH IT COST DIANA HER LIFE.

ARES!

YOU WILL PAY FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE!

THEN.



ENLIGHTEN ME.

THE FIELDS OF FIRE ARE LITTERED WITH DEAD.

ALL HAVE FALLEN.

WHO ARE YOU TO CHALLENGE THE GOD OF WAR?

DIANA HAD WARNED ME OF ITS POWER, ITS ABILITY TO CORRUPT...

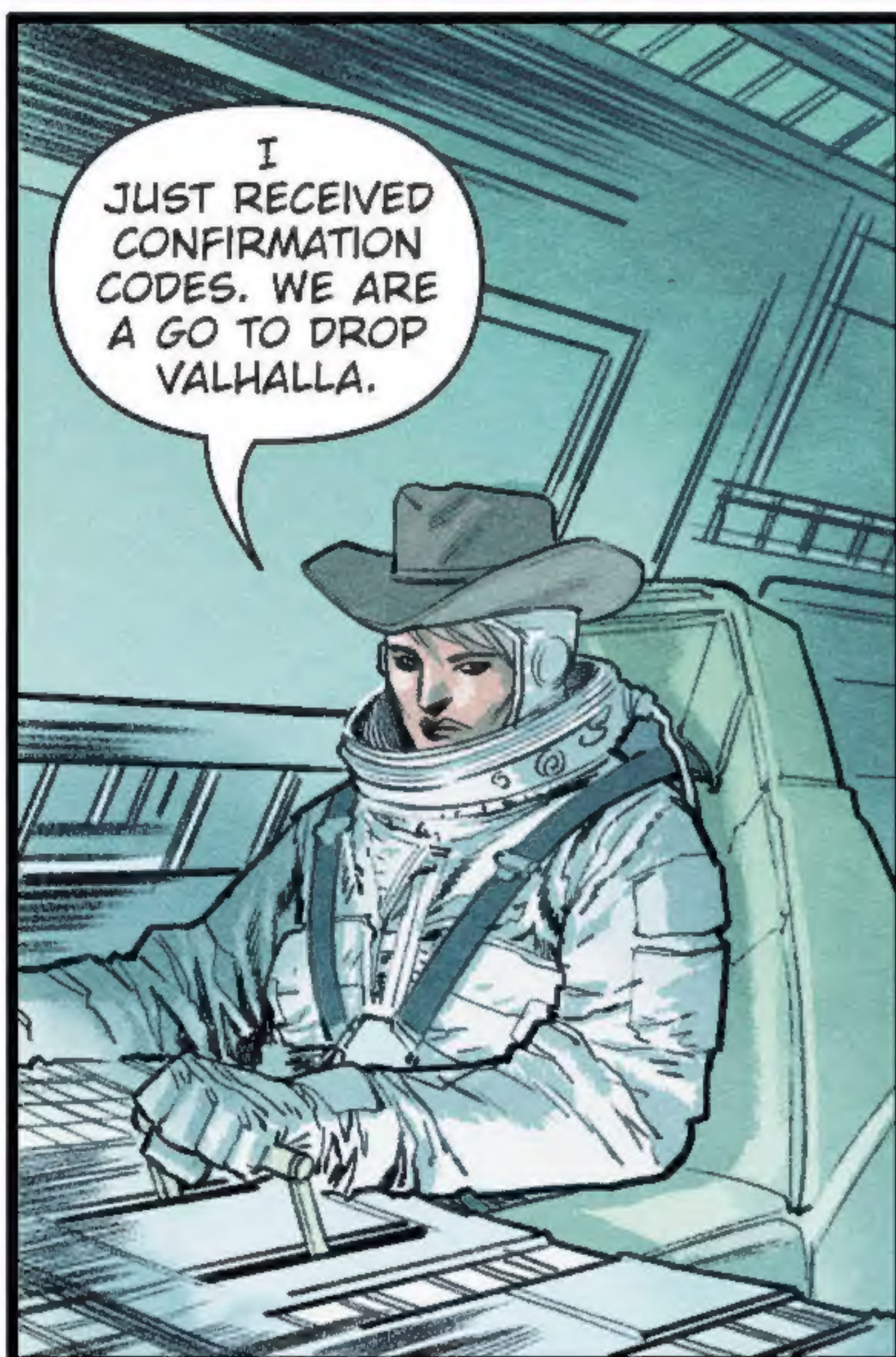
BUT AT THAT MOMENT, I SAW IT...

SAW THE POSSIBILITY...IF I TOOK THE HELMET, I COULD WIELD ITS POWER MERCIFULLY, WITH RESTRAINT. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY, WAR COULD BE JUST, FAIR.

WITH CODES AND RULES I WOULD RESHAPE WAR...

...AS ITS DAMNED GOD.







WITH YOUR DIRTY PAST, YOU DON'T BELONG IN THIS ALLIANCE, BONES! I SHOULD'VE PUT AN EXPLOSIVE IN YOUR HEAD AND SENT YOU OUT WITH THE SQUAD!

YOU'RE A HYPOCRITICAL TOOL FOR--

FRAXX

GAHH!



YOU'RE SOFT, TREVOR--THAT'S WHY WONDER WOMAN LEFT YOU!

AND YOU'RE A XENOPHOBIC ASS-HAT, LANE. THAT BOMB IS NOT HAPPENING!

GET OFF ME, YOU LITTLE DEMON. HE'S COMING!

HE'S COMING? HE'S ALREADY HERE!



I STARE AT THESE SO-CALLED... WARRIORS IN THE WAR ROOM.

THEY FIGHT LIKE DOGS BECAUSE THEY CAN'T PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM MY PRESENCE.

YOU WOULD EXPECT TOO MUCH FROM THEM, DIANA.

YOU WOULD EXPECT THEM TO BAND TOGETHER, NEGOTIATE, COMPROMISE.



I MISS YOU.

THEN.

YOU WOULD HAVE SAID I WAS CORRUPTED BY THE HELMET IN THE MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED YOUR DEATH. KILLING THOSE I SHOWED **MERCY** TO BEFORE. MY ENEMIES, AND HEROES WHO STOOD AGAINST.

I WOULD SAY THAT I WAS **PURIFIED**. THAT MY ILLUSIONS WERE FINALLY, RIGHTFULLY STRIPPED AWAY, WITH THE HELMET.

MY WHOLE LIFE, I HAD BEEN **AFRAID** OF DOING WHAT I KNEW **NEEDED** TO BE DONE. AFRAID TO GIVE **ALL** OF MYSELF TO THE BATTLE.

THE HELMET SHOWED ME THAT MY CODES AND RULES WERE NAIVE. THAT ALL THAT TRULY MATTERED WAS **VICTORY**.

AND NOW, I WOULD FINALLY **TAKE** IT FOR MYSELF.

I WAS STORMING OLYMPUS WHEN...

...I HEARD HIS VOICE.

LIKE MINE, BUT IT CHILLED ME TO THE BONE.



YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO SEE THE END OF YOUR GLORIOUS WAR. YOU'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO BUILD A FINER WORLD FROM THE ASH.

OR PROVE TO DIANA THAT IN THE END, THIS SCORCHED PATH WAS RIGHT.

IT'S A LOSING WAR, BRUCE.

YOU'RE PLAYING THE GAME RIGHT, BUT THE RULES ARE STACKED AGAINST YOU. TRUST ME. I'VE BEEN READING UP.



IN A MATTER OF MINUTES, THIS WORLD WILL CEASE TO EXIST. IF NOT FOR ALL THE EXPLOSIONS, YOU WOULD HAVE ALREADY FELT THE TREMORS.

YOU LIE.

THAT HELMET OF YOURS...IT LETS YOU PEER INTO THE HEARTS OF MEN. NOW, I MIGHT NOT HAVE A HEART, BUT YOU CAN SENSE WHO I AM. CAN'T YOU?

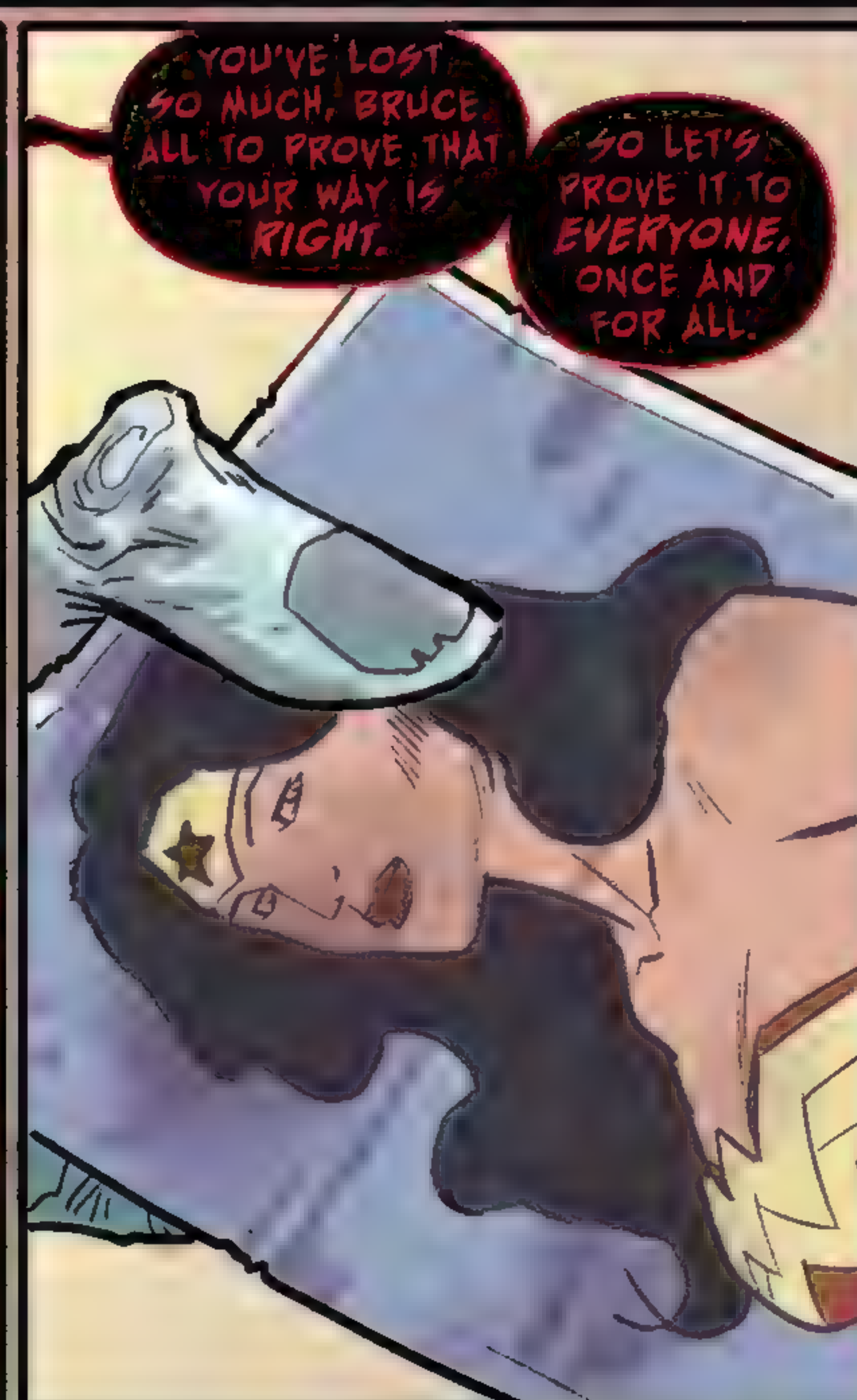
YOU KNOW THIS ISN'T A TRICK. YOU KNOW I'M SPEAKING THE TRUTH. AND YOU KNOW THAT I WOULDN'T BE HERE IF I DIDN'T HAVE AN OFFER TO MAKE.



YOUR WAR HERE IS OVER.

BUT A **GREATER** WAR IS JUST ON THE HORIZON.

PERHAPS THE GREATEST WAR THE COSMOS HAS EVER SEEN. AND WE'RE GOING TO **NEED** SOMEONE WHO UNDERSTANDS HOW TO WIN IT.



YOU'VE LOST SO MUCH, BRUCE. ALL TO PROVE THAT YOUR WAY IS RIGHT.

SO LET'S PROVE IT TO EVERYONE, ONCE AND FOR ALL.

I HAD NOTHING LEFT TO LOSE AND EVERYTHING TO GAIN.

SO I FOLLOWED HIM.

A NEW
BATTLEGROUND...

GROW
GROW

FOR HERE IS THE
TRUTH, DIANA.

GROW
GROW

THE TRUTH
THE HELMET
TEACHES.

GROW
GROW

THERE IS NO WAR
BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL,
RIGHT AND WRONG.

THERE IS ONLY THE
WAR FOR SURVIVAL.

AND IT IS
CONSTANT,
AND TOTAL.

GROW
GROW
GROW
GROW
GROW
GROW

IN THE RED, THE
WEAKEST FEELS TEETH
IN HIS BACK LEGS.

IN THE GREEN,
A HUNGRY VINE
CREEPS TOWARD
ITS NEIGHBOR.

OUR WORLDS
WERE WEAK,
COMPARED TO
THIS ONE, THE
ONE ABOVE.

BUT TOGETHER,
WE WOULD
CONQUER IT.



WE WOULD
WAGE WAR
AGAINST OUR
FATE.




AGAINST THOSE WHO
WOULD CALL US DREAMS
AND NIGHTMARES.



HOPES
AND
FEARS.

EVEN IF IT
MEANT MAKING
ENEMIES OF
OLD ALLIES.



I KEPT MY EYES
ON HIM, WHEN
WE ARRIVED.

I COULD NOT
LOOK AT YOU.

I WANDERED
TO AVOID THE
SIGHT OF YOU.

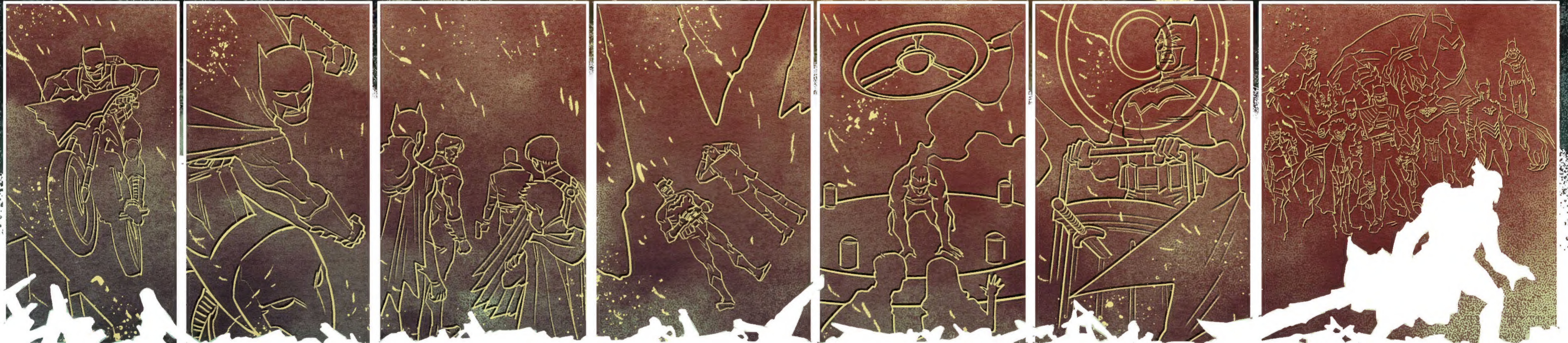
BENEATH THE TOMB WAS A
TEMPLE. A TEMPLE BUILT FOR THE
BRUCE WAYNE OF THIS WORLD.

ITS WALLS
TOLD HIS
STORY.

THE TALE OF
HIS WAR OF HALF
MEASURES...

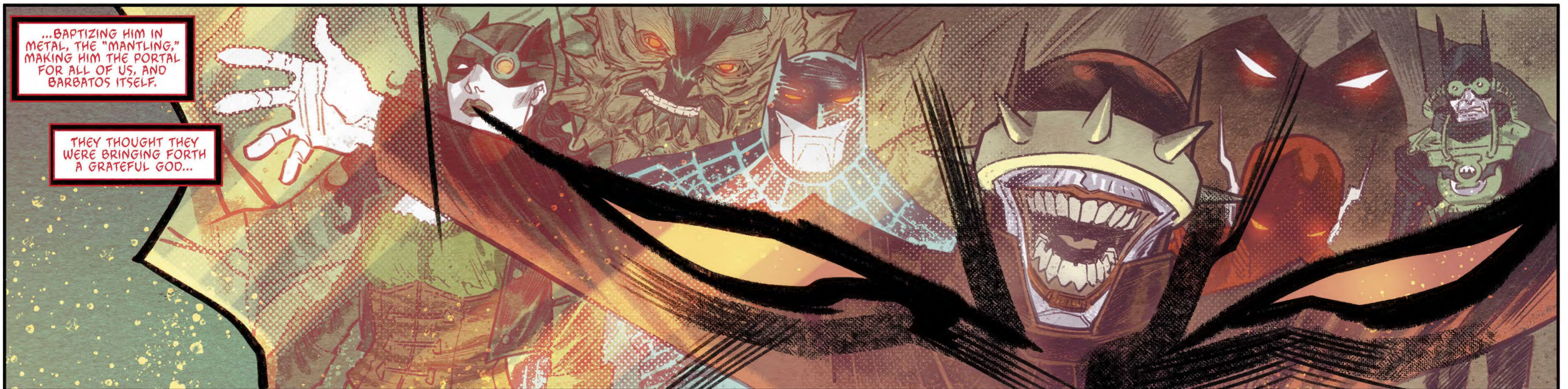
THE TALE OF ITS FUTILITY,
OF HOW HIS ENEMIES PREYED
UPON HIS MERCY, AND USED
HIM AS A PAWN.

HOW THE COURT OF OWLS,
AND THEIR ANCIENT PRIESTS,
THE STRIGYDAE, PREPARED
HIM OVER YEARS...



...BAPTIZING HIM IN
METAL, THE "MANTLING,"
MAKING HIM THE PORTAL
FOR ALL OF US, AND
BARBATOS ITSELF.

THEY THOUGHT THEY
WERE BRINGING FORTH
A GRATEFUL GOD...



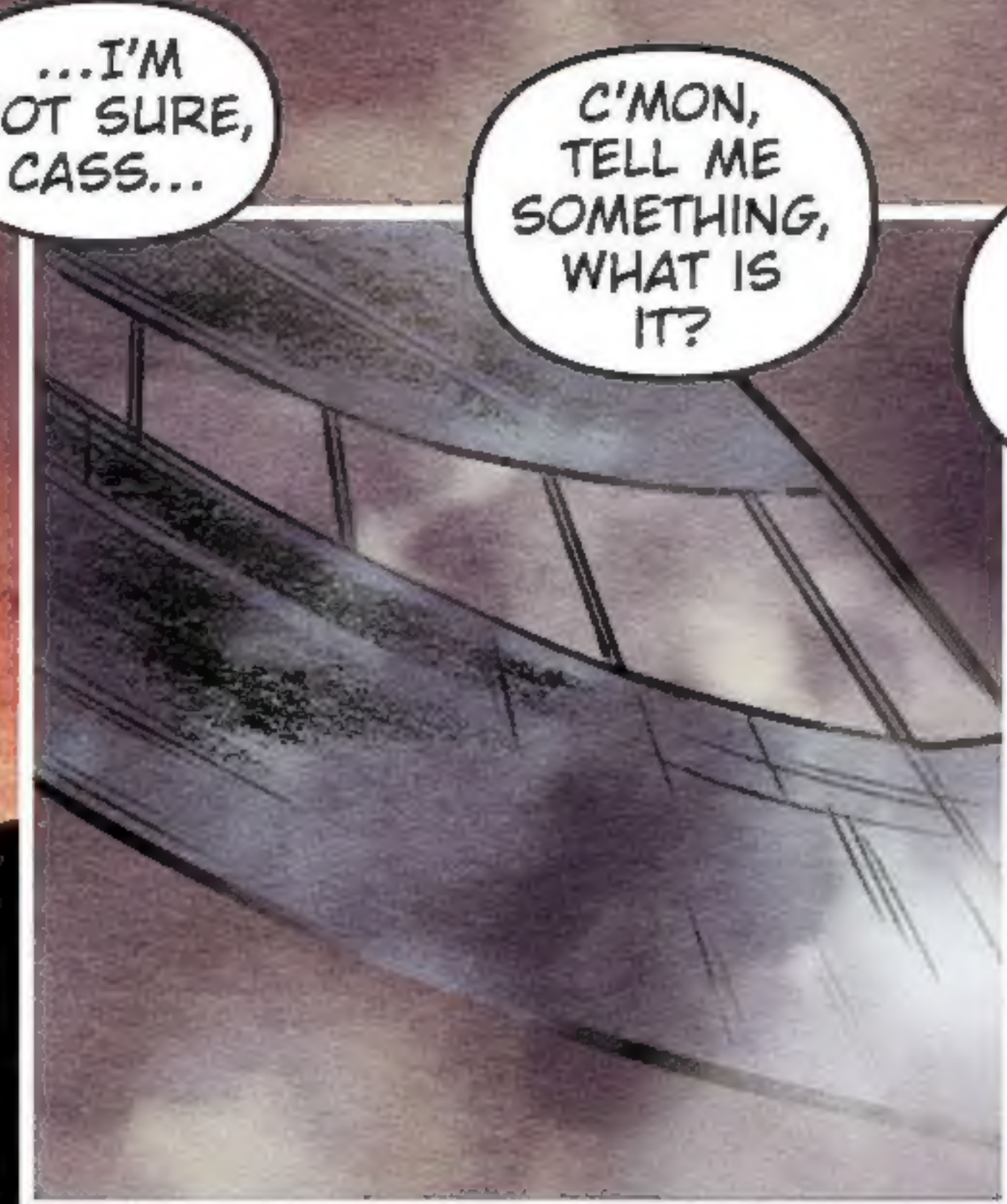
...THEY HAD NO IDEA THE
WAR THEY HAD BROUGHT
UPON THEIR HEADS.



BOOM!



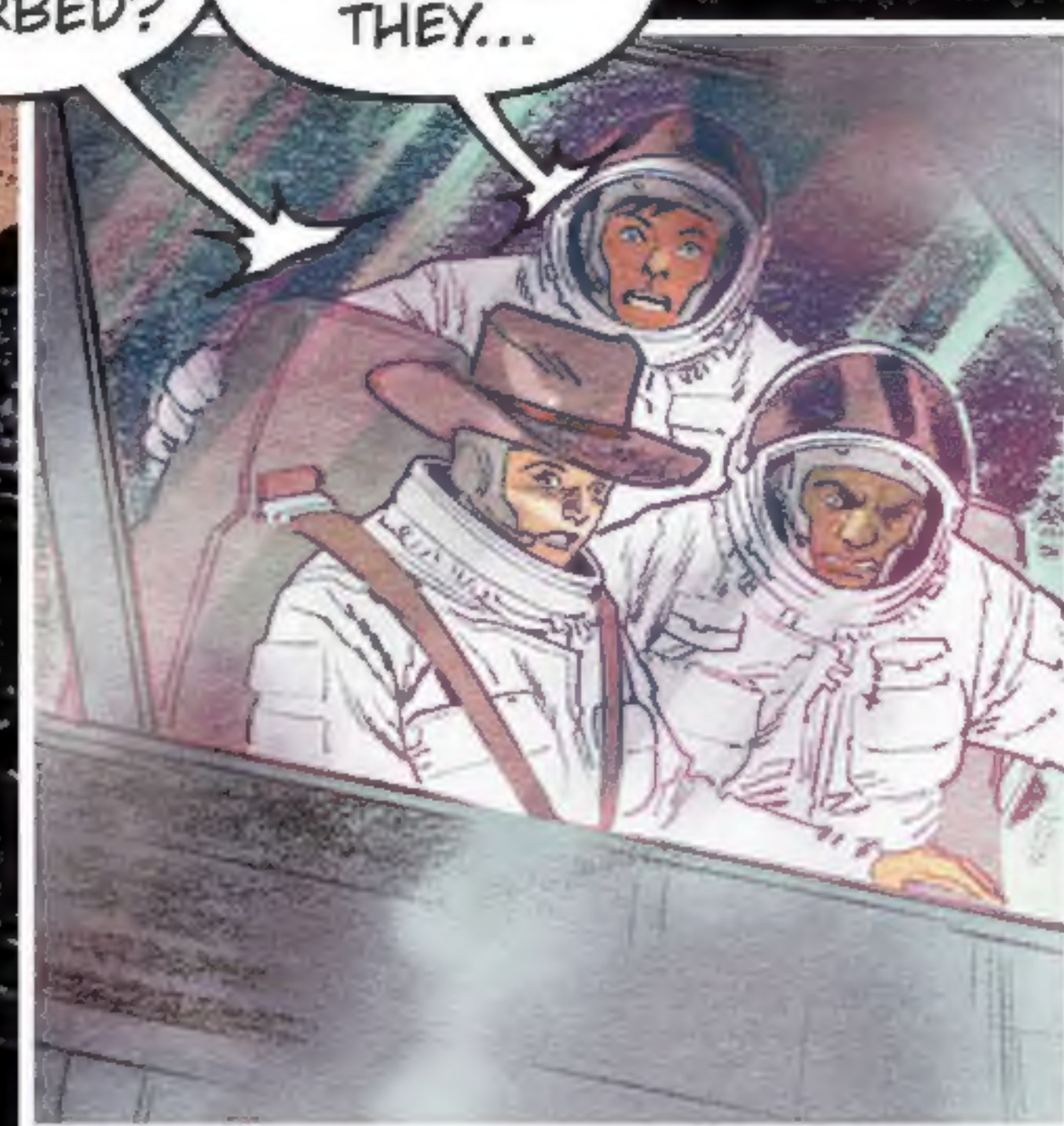
WHAT
READINGS
DO WE HAVE,
COWGIRL?



...I'M
NOT SURE,
CASS...

C'MON,
TELL ME
SOMETHING,
WHAT IS
IT?

THE BLAST...
IT SEEMS TO
HAVE BEEN...
ABSORBED?



MY GOD...
LOOK! DOWN
THERE! ARE
THEY...

...PRAYING?

NOW THEY SEE
THE TRUTH.

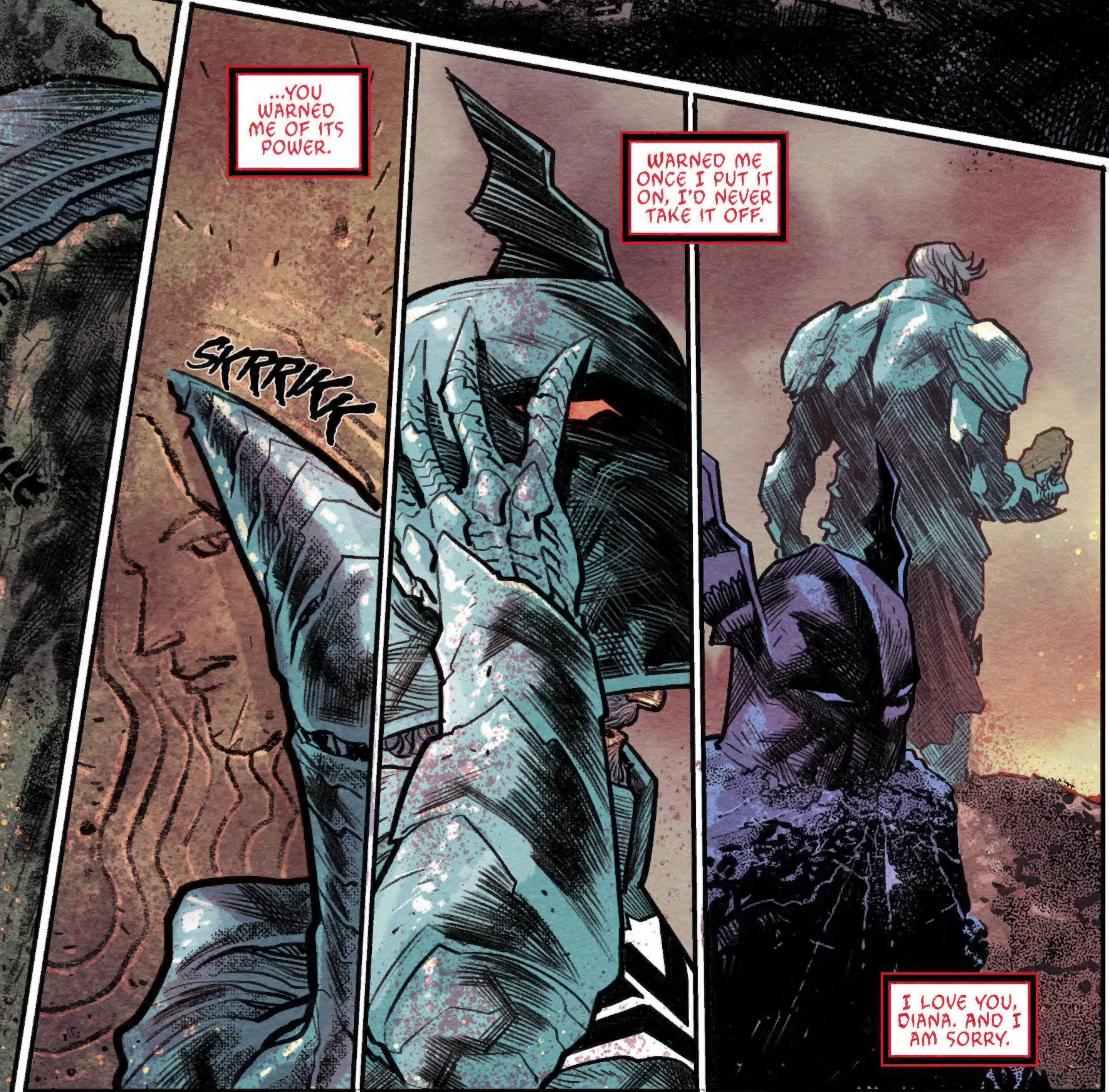
THEIR PRECIOUS
WEAPON ONLY MAKES
ME STRONGER.

AND FEEDS
MY HUNGER.

WITH THE HELMET,
I COULD MAKE THEM
FIGHT TO THE DEATH
FOR MY AMUSEMENT.

BUT THAT
WOULD BE
MERCIFUL.

INSTEAD, I'LL
MAKE THEM WATCH
AS I CONQUER
THEIR WORLD.



...YOU
WARNED
ME OF ITS
POWER.

WARNED ME
ONCE I PUT IT
ON, I'D NEVER
TAKE IT OFF.

I LOVE YOU,
DIANA. AND I
AM SORRY.

...SORRY YOU
TRIED TO **TAKE**
IT FROM ME.

BUT WHAT
WAS I SUPPOSED
TO DO WHEN
I SAW YOU WERE
STILL **ALIVE**?

THAT ARES
HAD ONLY
STUNNED YOU.

YOU
REACHED
FOR IT,
DIANA.

FOR THE
HELMET.

SO I HAD
TO STRIKE
YOU DOWN.

I LOOK AT
HIM AND SEE
THE MAN I
USED TO BE.

HE
FIGHTS WITH
MERCY. WITH
RESTRAINT.

WHICH IS WHY
HE'LL LOSE.

AND THIS WORLD WILL
FALL TO BARBATOS.

NEXT:
THE DARK KNIGHTS
CONTINUE TO RISE IN
DEVASTATOR #1!